



Memorandum

City of Auburn
Community Development Department

To:	Auburn Planning Commission
From:	Reg Murray, Senior Planner <i>RAM</i>
Date:	September 10, 2010
Subject:	Sierra Club Endorsement Letter for Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan

The Placer Group of the Sierra Club has submitted a letter of endorsement for the Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan (see attached). The letter was received after the Planning Commission staff report went out for publication, so it is being provided under separate cover for the Commission's consideration.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (530) 823-4211 ext 140.

Will Wong

From: Terry Davis [terry.davis@sierraclub.org]
Sent: Thursday, September 09, 2010 7:32 PM
To: Will Wong
Cc: Adrienne Graham; Reg Murray; 'Marilyn Jasper'
Subject: To Auburn Planning Commission re Baltimore Ravine, Sept 21 Agenda Item
Attachments: Baltimore Ravine Smart Growth Checklist.pdf

Dear Members of the Auburn Planning Commission,

I would like to report to you that on September 1, 2010 the Executive Committee of the Placer Group of the Sierra Club (one of eleven local groups in the Mother Lode Chapter) decided to endorse the Baltimore Ravine project.

Although our group has opposed a number of local projects (mostly in the unincorporated areas of the county), we are not anti-growth. Instead we have tried to distinguish between smart growth and sprawl. For those projects that we have opposed we have typically asked for changes in projects' designs or better mitigations for environmental impacts; sometimes we have recommended that such projects be directed to cities rather than to unincorporated areas. We have consistently opposed putting new subdivisions in ecologically sensitive areas or in remote rural or agricultural locations.

Because the Sierra Club believes in recognizing and supporting smart growth, we have been tracking on the Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan for several years. After the Draft EIR was complete, in deciding whether to support the project we employed the Sierra Club Mother Lode Chapter Smart Growth Checklist. The result was that the project scored favorably on 11.5 of 14 applicable smart growth criteria (82%). As a result we decided that Baltimore Ravine was the kind of project that we should endorse as representing responsible development.

Why does the Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan represent smart growth to us?

First, it would be built within existing city limits, adjacent to existing development. It is not one of those projects that 'leap-frogs' into distant agricultural lands.

Secondly, Baltimore Ravine is very compact for a foothill project. 59% of the project's dwelling units would be in high density residential or in mixed use (in which retail and residential can occupy the same buildings). Most of the homes would be clustered around a park and a shopping area, creating a compact walkable village which would enable residents to drive less and have smaller carbon footprints. And we were also pleased that ten percent of dwelling units would be affordable, helping with Auburn's jobs-housing balance.

Thirdly, this project respects the existing local habitat and topography. It completely avoids development in the impressive wooded ravine, its namesake, which is highly visible from Interstate 80. Development would occur only on relatively flat areas; there would be no hillside development, as slopes above 20% would be avoided. Of the project's 277 acres, 141 acres would be left in natural open space.

There were additional factors that we considered. To help reach our decision we used our Smart Growth Checklist to rate the project. The result was a favorable score of 11.5 of 14 applicable smart growth criteria, or

82%. Please consider the 'Baltimore Ravine Smart Growth Checklist,' which is attached, as part of these comments.

The demand for new homes in the foothills will no doubt return, and when it does we need to have responsible ways of dealing with it; otherwise that demand will be met exclusively with low density residential development that will alter the character of the foothills while contributing more air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions than necessary. We believe that Baltimore Ravine represents an outstanding model for new development in the foothills, one that Auburn should be proud of.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comment,

Terry Davis
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Conservation Program Coordinator, Mother Lode Chapter
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BALTIMORE RAVINE: SMART GROWTH OR NOT?
USING THE MOTHER LODE CHAPTER CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING THE
PROJECT

Is the project located in an infill location, within the existing urban footprint, or within an adopted urban growth boundary? (Infill is defined as having urban development on at least three sides.)

☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Maybe ☐ N/A

If Interstate 80, north of the site, is considered urban development then the project has urban development on three sides and would be considered infill. (To the east and south are suburban residential; to the west is unincorporated large lot rural residential.). The City of Auburn has not adopted an urban growth boundary, but the project is within its existing city limits so no annexation process is required.

Will the project be served by public transit?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐ N/A

Bus service is planned to be extended to the project. There will be three bus stops.

Is the project pedestrian-friendly and bicycle-friendly?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐ N/A

There will be a comprehensive system of bike lanes and sidewalks that provide pedestrian and bicycle connectivity throughout the development, and a public trail system in the natural open space areas, including in Baltimore Ravine itself.

Does the project minimize vehicle miles traveled?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐ N/A

The project is located adjacent to existing development in the City of Auburn, providing proximity to City services and shopping. Internally the project has its own retail center, which includes mixed use (residential and commercial in the same building) surrounded by high density residential, enabling shopping and other services to be within walking distance or a very short drive for most residents.

Does it have a substantial mixed-use portion, combining residential, professional and retail?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐ N/A

It has 28 acres of mixed-use, including 252 dwelling units and 90,000 square feet of commercial.

Is there an emphasis on neighborhood retail shopping, rather than freeway-based big box stores?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐ N/A

Although the project is near Interstate 80 it will have no freeway commercial – neighborhood commercial only, no big box stores.

Are residential densities high? (In a suburban setting, 15 dwelling units per net residential acre is excellent.)

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐ N/A

For development in the foothills, this project has very high density. 59% of the dwelling units are in high density residential or high density mixed use (430 of 725 d/u).

Does it have an inclusionary component for affordable housing? Are a significant number of the dwelling units reserved for those with very low, low, and moderate incomes? (In general, an inclusionary percentage of 15% is considered adequate)

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐ N/A

The project meets the SACOG recommendations for affordable housing, which is 10% of all dwelling units (including 4% of dwelling units affordable to very low-income households, 4% affordable to low-income households, and 2% affordable to moderate income households). In Placer County, generally the only projects reaching 15% affordable are those which use redevelopment funds and are required by ordinance to have 15%.

Does the project fully mitigate for or avoid impacts to sensitive species and vernal pools, wetlands, stream corridors and other sensitive habitats?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐ N/A

Two special status species have been found on the site, Brandegee's Clarkia and the Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle (assumed presence). The former is already in designated open

space and will be avoided during any fuels management. The latter was discovered near the railroad line, more than 100 ft. from any planned disturbance.

No vernal pools exist on the site, but there are wetlands. They will be avoided or mitigated under a Section 404 permit issued by the Corps of Engineers under the 'no net loss' policy toward wetlands.

The site has significant riparian vegetation in the two ravines that have perennial streams. The project avoids broad corridors along Baltimore Ravine and Dutch Ravine with 141 acres of natural open space. (The entire project is 277 acres.) The project also avoids impacts to foothill topography, limiting development to relatively flat and gently sloping areas, avoiding slopes of greater than 20 percent.

Are impacts to farmland mitigated?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☒ N/A

The project site is not designated agricultural; it is designated Urban Reserve. The remains of an historic orchard are present, but no active agriculture is currently conducted on the site.

Is there an identified water supply for the project beyond what is required for other planned growth served by the same water supply? Will the new development pay for any costs associated with the additional supply, delivery and treatment?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐ N/A

PCWA has completed a Water Supply Assessment per SB 221 and SB 610 that ensures adequate water supply to serve currently planned growth in Placer County, including this project. The developer has agreed to provide any onsite or offsite pipelines or any other facilities needed to supply the project.

Does it promote water conservation (e.g. make use of recycled water in landscaping)

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Maybe ☐ N/A

The project itself does not, although its water supplier (PCWA) has one of the most advanced water conservation programs in the region.

Does the project promote alternative and renewable energy? (e.g. solar panels, energy-efficient design)

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Maybe ☐ N/A

There are no requirements for solar panels or energy efficient designs. Those options could be offered by the eventual homebuilders.

Is the project outside the 100-year floodplain and not otherwise subject to catastrophic flooding?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐ N/A

No lots are in the floodplain.

Will the development pay for itself; that is, fund its own infrastructure costs?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐ N/A

There is to be no cost to the City to provide public facilities and infrastructure to serve the project. A Development Agreement will require that construction, operation and maintenance of project facilities and infrastructure will be borne entirely by the project.
